



MERCER
COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

COURSE OUTLINE

Course Number	Course Title	Credits
POL-101	The American Political System	3.0
Hours: Lecture/Lab/Other 3/0/0	Co- or Pre-requisite ---	Implementation Semester & Year FA 2022

Catalog description:

Introduction to the basic structures of the United States national government and the political processes with a view toward helping the student to understand better current issues and policies. Topics include the Constitution, national-state relations and powers, the legislative and judicial processes, elections, and the activities of interest groups.

General Education Category:

Goal 5: Social Science

**Course coordinator: Ken Howarth, 6095703809
howarthk@mccc.edu**

Required texts & Other materials:

American Politics Today (Essentials Sixth Edition) Essentials, Sixth Edition, by William T. Bianco and David T. Canon, Norton, 2018, ISBN: 978-0393679946

Handouts & Websites as directed; for updated editions/similar text-check bookstore

Course Student Learning Outcomes (SLO):

Upon successful completion of this course the student will be able to:

1. To challenge, criticize, and/or defend the norms, values, and ideals that form the foundation of American Democracy. (ILGs 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10) (PLOs 1, 2, 3, 4)
2. To identify participants in political systems and analyze their role, influence, and power. (ILGs 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10) (PLOs 1, 2, 3, 4)
3. To compare the respective sphere of responsibility and power of the levels of government in the American federal system. (ILGs 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10) (PLOs 1, 2, 3, 4)
4. To specify and describe the various methods of political participation available in the American political system. (ILGs 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10) (PLOs 1, 2, 3, 4)
5. To explain the structure, process, and interrelationship of the three branches of American government. (ILGs 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10) (PLOs 1, 2, 3, 4)

6. To describe, and evaluate the major domestic and foreign policies of the American government. (ILGs 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10) (PLOs 1, 2, 3, 4)
7. To analyze current political developments in terms of concepts used throughout the course. (ILGs 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10) (PLOs 1, 2, 3, 4)

Each goal or outcome relates to “political science literacy” with respect to content knowledge and to the “discipline-specific methodologies” of the study of politics with respect to relevant content material. Other learning goals may be specified in particular sections by the instructor with the course coordinator’s approval in addition to but not as a replacement for the above listed goals.

Course-specific Institutional Learning Goals (ILG):

Institutional Learning Goal 1. Written and Oral Communication in English. Students will communicate effectively in both speech and writing.

Institutional Learning Goal 5. Social Science. Students will use social science theories and concepts to analyze human behavior and social and political institutions and to act as responsible citizens.

Institutional Learning Goal 6. Humanities. Students will analyze works in the fields of art, music, or theater; literature; philosophy and/or religious studies; and/or will gain competence in the use of a foreign language.

Institutional Learning Goal 7. History. Students will understand historical events and movements in World, Western, non-Western or American societies and assess their subsequent significance.

Institutional Learning Goal 8. Diversity and Global Perspective: Students will understand the importance of a global perspective and culturally diverse peoples

Institutional Learning Goal 9. Ethical Reasoning and Action. Students will understand ethical frameworks, issues, and situations.

Institutional Learning Goal 10. Information Literacy: Students will recognize when information is needed and have the knowledge and skills to locate, evaluate, and effectively use information for college level work.

Institutional Learning Goal 11. Critical Thinking: Students will use critical thinking skills understand, analyze, or apply information or solve problems.

Program Learning Outcomes for Liberal Arts (PLO)

1. Concept Knowledge Understand the vocabulary, methods, and major concepts present in the humanities, the social sciences, and the natural sciences
2. Communication Articulate complex ideas clearly and effectively, both verbally and in writing
3. Critical Thinking Perform a series of thinking tasks including speculation, analysis, and synthesis (i.e., abstract reasoning)
4. Research Methods Utilize research materials and methodologies

Units of study in detail – Unit Student Learning Outcomes:

The general plan for this course is broadly in two parts; the first unit serves as a primer of religious studies; while subsequent units address various contemporary issues and focus on subject particulars and applications of more general religious influences.

Units in Summary

Unit 1 – Development of U.S. Democracy and the Federal System

Unit 2 – Development of Civil Liberties and Civil Rights

Unit 3 – American Political Process

Unit 4 – The Three Branches of U.S. Government

Detailed Units:

Units of study in detail.

Unit I: Development of U.S. Democracy and the Federal System (SLOs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5)

Learning Objectives *The student will be able to...*

1. understand the history of the creation of the U.S. Constitution and its importance
2. explain the development and workings of American federalism
3. understand the advantages and disadvantages of federalism

Unit II: Development of Civil Liberties and Civil Rights (SLOs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7)

Learning Objectives *The student will be able to...*

1. Describe basic rights guaranteed under the U.S. Constitution
2. Understand the relevance of case law to the development of U.S. rights and
3. Understand the development of basic rights over the course of U.S. history

Unit III: American Political Process (SLOs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7)

Learning Objectives *The student will be able to...*

1. Understand the formulation measurement and content of public opinion
2. Explain the nature, diversity and power of interest groups
3. Analyze the strategies and tactics used by interest groups and political candidates
4. Analyze the voting behavior of the American electorate

Unit IV: The Three Branches of U.S. Government (SLOs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5)

Learning Objectives *The student will be able to...*

1. Describe the structure of the branches of government
2. Explain the concept of separation of powers in the American political
3. Discuss the policy making process within the branches of government

Evaluation of student learning:

There will be three in-class examinations. The examinations will consist of both essay and objective type questions. The students will also be graded on class participation and a term project
Proportional weight given to the component parts of each students' grade is as follows:

Three Examinations - to be announced - 75%
Term Project - 20%
Class Participation - 5%

(The last exam may be a comprehensive take home examination - at the instructor's option)

The Term Project requires students to apply the Public Policy-making Model thoroughly described in the Introduction section of the textbook. This involves selecting and researching a law or policy and applying the steps associated with the model.